WORDEATER
#64
JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE
PETROVIK
CO-

WORDEATER 64 STAFF:

Donna Aiello
Stanley Holland
Sharon Peck
Barbara Pillasch
M. RamZ
Patricia Shue
John Stobart

NEXT DEADLINES:

September 23, 1988
November 18, 1988

In order to get a selection published in this issue, four of the above had to vote for acceptance. For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

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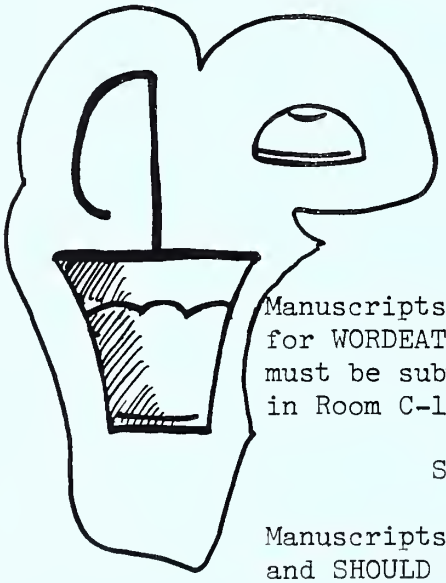
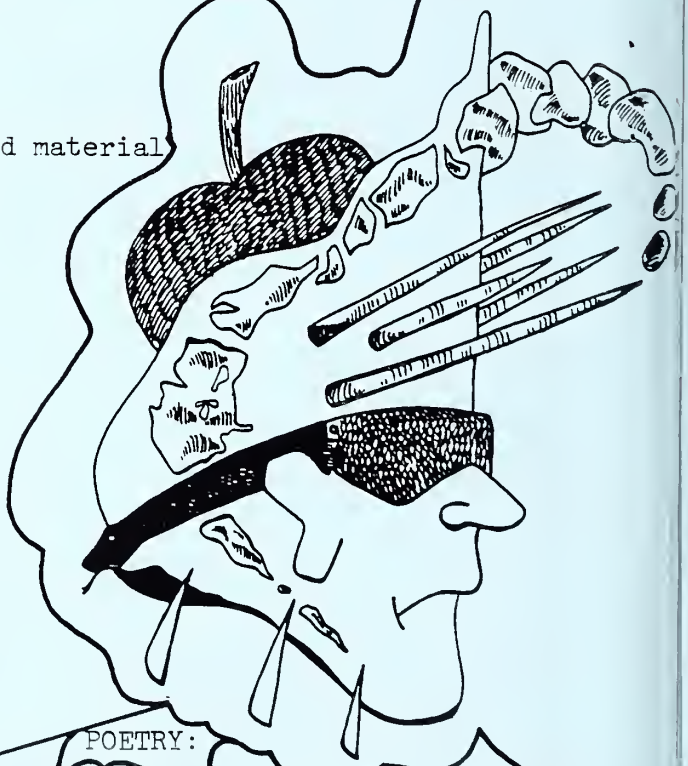


Manuscripts or cover designs for WORDEATER 65 must be submitted to John Stobart in Room C-1069 by:

September 23, 1988

Manuscripts will not be returned and SHOULD BE TYPED.



AWARDS

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POETRY:

W. A. Kahle $25
Paulette Georgantas $10

No Prose Awards this issue.

COVERS:

Bill Petrovic $20

WORDEATER #64

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Paulette Georgantas

SILENCE

There was a silence when you spoke to me
Of proprieties,
Of hands neatly folded in a lap
Or legs crossed only at the ankles,
Of postures,
Of things that proper ladies do,
But often,
So much more often,
Of things that ladies don't.
A vacancy.
Muted, echoless emotions
Like fingernails clipping an empty tin can.
A vacuous distance
Between my fingers
And your hand.
A desert cactus,
Caressed,
By dry, wind-blown sand.
A pleonastic struggle, shadowed in silence.
Words without rest-
Rushing-pulling-pushing
In heat-crushing anguish
Toward some silvered, liquid mirage,
Grasping at the acceptance
Of all who had shunned you
For your mother's lack of virtue.
An unholy quest
To clasp within your illegitimate palm
One shard
Of a shattered, crystalling heirloom.
But the vision,
Ever distant,
Misted,
Vanished in the heat of the sun
As I cupped my hand
To gather the moisture
That might quench your endless thirst.
On and on we went
In blistered,
Pustulant-silence
To raze the whore
Inherited
In the flighty eyes
And liberal laughter
Of the woman you had buried
In some parched and withered place
Within your mind.
You drew stars on calendar squares
For each day of desolation
That I desecrated no rule.
Monthly, I obtained
The prize of perfection
That I might never be
My grandmother's image.
In deference,
I clothed myself in ash-brown,
Torn,
Shorn from a rootless tree,
That vanity could never take me
And cast me into the arms of a lover.
I dwelled there with you,
In that void,
A dead stump
Giving shade to a cold stone,
Forever seeking your touch
And hearing only-
Raging
Silence.

****

Judy Belfield

EPHEMERA

A blend of violins
as smooth as bourbon
poured itself into air.
Silence was drunk:
slurred its wordlessness,
stretched as lazily
as a waking leopard's paws.
A something happened
in those soft moments--
a something separated from life
yet desperately clutching.
I felt it
creeping up my neck
like a warm shadow
capable of saturating skin.
I wonder how I might explain
the something (which happened
as casually as the flick
of a moth's wing,
the sudden twitch of autumn into winter
or winter to spring).
How shall I say without inelegance
a thing absurd?

****

Kristin Schaeffer

I WAS STANDING

I was standing at the corner store
I didn't go there to shop
I was only passing by
When something made me stop

A great big grinning tiger
Who escaped out of the zoo
Looked me right straight in the eye
And said, "How do you do?"

I kept myself quite quiet
For I know they can sense fear
And all the while was thinking
How will I get out of here

But then I put my glasses on
And took a closer look
And still I don't remember
Exactly how long that it took

And then I realized it
I felt like such a jerk
The tiger was just a statue
So I continued on to work.

****

Joe Talluto

PORCHLIGHT

Sittin' back on a porch
Late evening, summer.
Sun is settin'
Still hot outside.
Breeze kicks up
Swirls the day's dust.
Field crickets
Start the concert.
Kids go to dinner.
Back out later,
Playing until dark.
Cooler now,
Sun's gone down.
Stars come out above,
Stars fly in the woods.
Sprinkler startin'
Late night work.
Backyard bugs
Purple glow
With electric death.
Kids squeal.
A game of night tag.
Dogs bark here,
Over there.
Sometimes a car
Drivin' slow.
People sounds fade.
Kids go to bed.
Crickets on second encore.
Sittin' on a porch
Late night, summer.

****

Amy E. Harris

REFLECTIONS

I'm the girl in the mirror
With the sad, sad eyes
Seeing the whole truth
Reflecting all the lies
Through the transparent haze
Of my cellophane soul

****

James Burkey

IN SEARCH OF REALITY

Bob shuddered as Lucy opened the window to her 23rd-floor apartment. Sunlight streamed in, blinding him momentarily, but once his eyes adjusted to the new rays of the morning, he scanned the room and could see her. Not Lucy, the appealing, pretty young blonde who could arouse the interest of any male kind enough to overlook her peg leg and hook prosthesis, no, not her, but Sussette, sweet Sussette, sleek, lithe, graceful Sussette. He knew that he loved her. Whenever she was near, he felt his heart beat like a drum in his chest. He longed to be near her...! If only he could get out of his prison...! If only he could get out of this damned bowl and be near her! If only... But no, it would never be. He was but a fish and she but a cat, and the world, cruel and uncaring, had set them apart

His water was getting warm in the sunlight, making him even more uncomfortable, as he gazed longingly at his beloved.

(continued)

Lucy, by this time, had started getting ready for the day when she glanced over at the fishbowl and noticed that Bob had his little mouth pressed up against the glass, seemingly staring at the cat.

"Naah, he must be hungry or something...," she muttered to herself, twitching spasmodically. She grabbed some fish food from a cabinet and blundered her way across the apartment, breaking china, bumping into furniture, and stepping on Ralf, the dog, with her peg leg, nearly putting a hole through him.

Yelping, Ralf relieved himself on the carpet and leapt up into the air. Seeing that it was merely Lucy, his beloved owner, he quickly began showing his affections for her, as all dogs do, by copulating with her leg.

"Ralf, you silly thing! Get off, Boy! Down!" Lucy cried, beating off the small bulldog with her massive iron hooks, inflicting several flesh wounds and nearly crippling him.

Once she determined that Ralf wouldn't be getting up for awhile, Lucy wiped off her leg with a pair of discarded underwear and left the apartment, seemingly forgetting to feed Bob. The door swung shut with a heavy click.

"Where the hell did she go?" rasped Ralf weakly from the floor.

"Oh great! Now you've done it Ralf! You stupid mongrel! It's as obvious as the drool on your chin that she has gone and left us for good! She's left us all to die! Who's going to feed us? Who's going to change my water when it gets green? WHO IS GOING TO TAKE CARE OF US, DAMMIT?!?" Bob quaked and trembled in his bowl, making intricate patterns of ripples on the water's surface.

"Oh suck red tide, Bob! Jeezus! She ain't left us fer' good!"

"How the hell do you know that, eh, Mr. SMARTY? How the hell would you know? She's gone, I tell you! Gone for good! And now we're all gonna die! We're all gonna shrivel up like prunes and die! Oh God, why? WHY?!? This is all your fault, Ralf. All your fault."

"If you don't clam your neurotic mouth, Bob, I'm gonna take a leak in your fish bowl again!"

That shut Bob up long enough for Lester to butt in.

"Would you faggots mind shutting the freaking farts up for a second, so decent human beings like me can finish sleeping!?!"

Lester, the rat, had been sleeping peacefully in Sussette's litter box, and resented having his beauty sleep time interrupted by what he deemed, 'mere animals'.

Ralf responded with a few dark words of his own, and soon the two began bickering over who was truly the best groomed animal in the house.

Bob ignored them, since he was more worried about what Sussette must think of him now. He thought his "Tough guy" approach would impress the socks off of her, so to speak, and found himself terribly disappointed to find that she was ignoring him steadfastly now. A trickle of a tear left his eye and merged with the rest of the water in his bowl. Apparently she likes sensitive men, casual and quiet, and yet strong-willed and handsome, he decided, preparing himself mentally for his new role.

Lester just sat in the litter box and stared at the rest of them in sullen resentment. They were nothing, he thought, and yet they dared address him in such a manner! How dared they? They were nothing! Less than nothing! He was the higher lifeform here! He was the great amongst them! His sullen expression slowly warped into a demented smile. Lester was a happy rat, a content rat. He was a rat with a purpose, and one far above such ilk as these 'mere animals'. The others were just pets, but he wasn't! He wasn't like them! He was his own master, and soon to be master of these...these...peasants too! Yess...

A globulet of spittle quivered, almost with a life of its own, as it cascaded off Ralf's jowls, staining the white carpet beneath him.

Meanwhile, high above all this, in the upper atmosphere of the living room, Bubba, the horsefly, buzzed about in perpetual fear, because he knew that everyone in the whole world was out to get him. Yes, everyone from the tormented goldfish to the psychotic rat wanted him dead. He didn't know why, for he had done nothing, but every single living creature in the entire planet wanted him dead, and were going

(continued)

to no bounds to complete this goal. But Bubba wasn't a stupid fly; he knew he was marginally safe here in this room full of physically and mentally handicapped creatures. No one would think to look for him here...

But no one, not even Bubba, whose eyes saw almost everything, knew about Clyde. Lester, the rat, the nosiest creature in the dwelling, had no notion of Clyde's very existence. Clyde, that is, the pickle. Clyde was no run-of-the-mill dill, however, he was no kosher kosher. No, he was different from other pickles because he had suffered. He had loved and lost. He had seen his beloved Cyndi, the adorable little dill next to him in the jar, killed before his very astonished eyes. Just when he thought he was the happiest pickle in the world..., Just when everything seemed to be going his way at last, just when they had agreed to be married and spend the rest of their existence together...,that hook...that evil hook, reached into the jar and impaled the wailing Cyndi. And Lucy, the wickedest witch he'd ever dreamed of, devoured his dill right in front of him as she writhed and screamed, pleading for her life.

But Clyde knew he would have revenge...! Someday the bitch would die at his hands. He would avenge himself and his lost love, and countless other devoured pickles who lost their lives to the evil one.

Bob pressed his face up even harder to the glass of his prison bowl. There she was, the love of his life, Sussette. Some day, they would be together. He dreamed of the day he would flop out of his bowl, make his way over to his queen, and with his last, dying gasps, suck the lint and hairballs from between the spaces of her toes. Ah, true love, he thought, is so beautiful.

It was then he realized that, due to the rigor he had been using to press his face up against the glass, his lips were now stuck to the side of the bowl.

Sussette stretched and yawned.

And a globulet of spittle quivered, almost with a life of its own, as it cascaded off Ralf's jowls, staining the carpet below.

Silently, Sussette got up and walked over to the fishbowl, leaping up to the table where the bowl rested. The goldfish inside, Joe, or was it Rob, was staring expectantly, a strange look of lust in his eyes. He seemed to be waiting for something as he glanced at her toes.

"This is it! The moment I've waited for! I'm here, my darling Sussette! I love you! I'm..."

Bob never got to finish his sentence.

"Oh my God! Oh piss," Ralf slobbered, "Sussette just ate Bob!"

"Bob, yes, that was it," muttered the cat as she gracefully leapt off of the table down to the floor.

Meanwhile, Lester, in his plan for world domination, urinated in a pitcher of milk that Lucy left out.

Bubba, on the other hand, was hidden inside a cabinet where a jar of pickles, conveniently left open, became his dumping grounds for a large load of eggs.

Clyde, in utter revulsion, screamed his death throes as millions of tiny soon-to-be maggots oozed into the jar, enveloping his body. His revenge would have to wait.

Lester slinked back into the litter box and was just falling asleep as Lucy returned home from downstairs where she was out causing public disturbances and automobile accidents for fun. Lester smiled as he drifted off...knowing that tomorrow the world would be his.

As for Ralf, he proceeded to make love to every available appendage as his owner, Lucy, made her spasmodic way across the room.

"Down, Ralf!" she said, raising one hook which glinted evilly in the light of the mid-morning. Ralf sat down immediately and played crippled.

Sussette coughed up a little bit of Joe...or Bob, yes, Bob, to show her mistress what a fine thing she had done.

Lucy laughed as she wiped the goldfish's head off of her bare feet, and petted her cat vigorously, leaving several gouges deep in her flesh, and remarked what a fine huntress her

(continued)

kitty was.
And a globulet of spittle quivered, almost with a life of its own, as it cascaded off Ralf's jowls, staining the carpet below...
to be continued...(not really)

****

Andrew

WHEN YOU KNOW

You know it's good
when the beauty of it
tickles your brain
to tingle all the distance
through your willing spine.

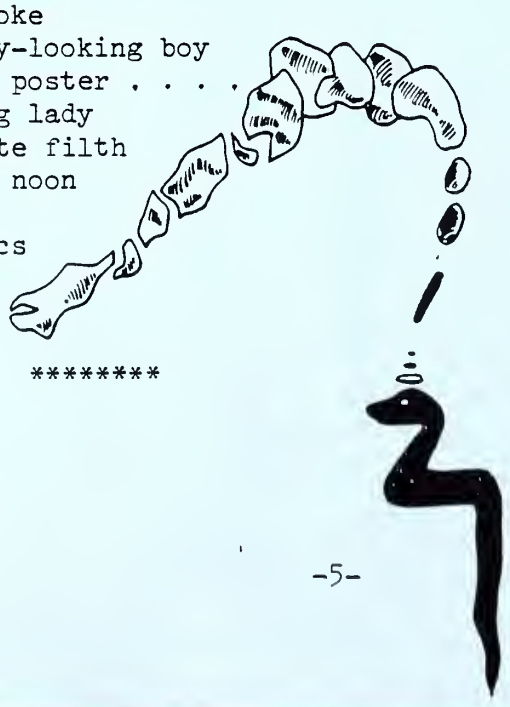
****

Andrew

OLD KNOWLEDGE

Indulgence or excess
three instead of one
never a second glace
or briefest consideration
at the yellowing flyers
hanging and aging outside
Red Cross offices
The Starving Children's Fund
is way away off
in another's ardent prayers
while the kiddies play
in Gucci summerwear
and jovially joke
about the funny-looking boy
on a "missing" poster . . . .
the ancient bag lady
lying in private filth
will expire at noon
tomorrow,
as the Cadillacs
and Lincolns
roll by.

****



Andrew

ASK GRANDMA

Multisyllablized wizard
a certain craftiness with words
might believe to have the answers
to decipher catastrophic instances
floating inside a hurricane's eye
maybe Rasputin or Cayce could've given
examples
of dominance lacking lasting control,
although,
there's this old, old lady
crocheting in a weatherbeaten rocker
not famous
not even rich--
but my God,
I BET SHE KNOWS!

****

Judy Belfield

SEER

Far from heaven--
unheard, unseen
in the nightblack eye
of a sleeping panther
we rest
no longer troubled
with wheezes and rasps,
labored breaths--
not troubled.
We transform rapidly
in the nightblack eye--
a dream dreamt
without sense,
discarded for another
more vibrant
less terrifying.

****

MaryAnn DesMarais

LIFE'S INDECISION

When to talk
or remain silent
Questions arise during distant walks
Wondering where our time went
At the long road ahead, I balk
Forced to remember time foolishly spent

Oh! to turn back the hands of the clock
-n- start all over--do it all again
Instead, I lazily recline on the shore's rocks
-n- ponder my stupidity at Life's Indecision
Laughing in the face of chances to leave marks
of mine on this world--Time waits for No One

****

d. f. aiello

THE TWO DOLLAR BILL

Characters: Di
Terry
Sharon
Joe, the bartender

Scene: A small empty bar. Three women are sitting on barstools with an empty stool between each. The one in the middle stool continuously checks her watch. The two women on either side watch her and smile to themselves. Joe is sitting on a stool behind the bar reading a western paperback book. He raises his head to check the contents of the three glasses. He sets the book down and walks toward the women.

Joe: You ladies ready for another drink?
Sharon: Sure, Joe. One for each of us. (Sharon points to Di and Terry's empty glasses.)
Terry: No, really. I'm waiting for a friend. (Terry checks her watch once again.) He's late.
--Joe leaves to make three drinks after Sharon motions with her head to go ahead.
Sharon: My name's Sharon. I work here on Friday and Saturday nights. (Sharon motions toward a small black nylon apron crumbled on the bar top.) Just got off duty half-hour ago. Joe follows me, (Sharon raises her voice and looks at Joe's back as he mixes drinks) when he's on time!
--Joe ignores her comment.
Di: Hi. I'm Diane, but everyone calls me Di.
Terry: Terry. (Terry says while pointing to her chest.) Officially, it's Theresa, I answer to Theresa, but I like Terry better.
(Terry's eyes nervously look at Di and Sharon, then back to her hands playing with the sipping straw from her empty glass.)

(continued)

Andrew

IN FACT

Surreptitious deeds
little works of art,
as dandelion seeds
the breeze carried apart:
we practice our talents
in every inch of life--
adding an aura of balance
by solitary act.

****

Lisa Strubin

BUMPER STICKERS

They follow him
wherever he goes.
Can't get rid of them,
never leads 'em on,
they just get attached.
He can't help it--
body of a Greek god,
eyes of an angel,
cursed with good looks;
women flock to him
and nag and whirl
'til he scrapes them off
like a stubborn bumper sticker.

****

Sharon: First time you been in a bar alone, Terry? (Sharon reaches for a cigarette.)
Terry: Does it show that much? (She smiles nervously at Sharon.)
Sharon: The watch. (Sharon points to Terry's wrist as she moves to the stool between them.) It's the giveaway. I've seen women sit for hours at my bar all the time checkin their watches-like any minute some gorgeous date is gonna walk through that door. (Sharon points to the door behind their stools with her thumb over shoulder.) Listen, no one'll bother you here, unless you want 'em to. We'll tell Joe we're buying our own drinks.
--Sharon laughs and Terry's body relaxes as Joe brings their drinks and picks up Sharon's money off the bar.
Sharon: Joe, same rule for my friend here. No drinks, no hassles.
--Joe nods his head.
Joe: Gotcha. (He walks back to the corner, sits on the stool, picks up his book and reads again.)
--All three women reach for the straws in their drinks and slowly stir the liquor.
Di: I always thought it would be fun to work where everyone else played. Do you like working here?
Sharon: It's all right. The extra money helps cover the six-fifty I get at the office. (Sharon takes a swallow from her glass and puts out her cigarette.) Besides, I like having a familiar place to stop for a drink-without using the watch trick.
--All three women laugh and drink from their glasses. Joe looks up from his book for a moment, shakes his head and continues reading.
Terry: Are you married? (She looks at Di and then at Sharon.)
Di: I was. Until two years ago. Caught him fooling around with a neighbor.
Sharon: What did he do? Walk out your door and into hers? (Sharon laughs and Di smiles.)
Di: He took up jogging every night. When he started jogging two hours, I followed him. (Di reaches for her glass) Out my door, halfway round the block and into hers. (Di gulps half of the glass's contents.)
--All three women finger-play with their glasses. They are silent for a few minutes.
Sharon: It's been five years since I was married. Got tired of supporting his lazy ass. (Sharon lights another cigarette.) How about you? (She looks at Terry as she lights the cigarette.)
Terry: Two weeks. Final. I mean it's been final for two weeks. (Terry starts playing with Sharon's cigarette pack.)
Di: A newcomer! (Di salutes Terry with her half-empty glass.) Don't worry, you're in the majority now. Do you have any kids?
Terry: A little boy. Well, not so little. He's five-six next month.
Di: I have two girls. Ten and twelve.
Sharon: Did you always want kids, Di? (Sharon finishes off her glass.)
--Diane waits for a moment, finishes her drink, then turns toward Terry and Sharon.
Di: I always wanted a baby. The kid part just comes after. (She thinks a moment more). Between two and nine, you could have kept my two, but past nine, well, we have fun together now. We talk, go to the movies. (Di shrugs her shoulders). We have fun.
--Terry sits between Di and Sharon smiling slightly to herself.
Sharon: It's funny. I've spent the last twenty years avoiding pregnancy. I never thought of myself as somebody's mother. (Quickly adds) I like kids, I just don't want anything that permanent. Especially while I was married to the creep!
Di: The creep! Sounds like something you step on. (Di, Terry, and Sharon laugh. Terry signals for Joe to bring another round as she finishes her drink.)
Sharon: Your turn, Terry. (Terry reaches for her purse as Joe sets three glasses down on wet glass coasters.)
--Terry plays with the change Joe gave her, head bent low again. Di and Sharon look at each other over Terry's head.
Sharon: Hey, don't mind me. I'm just nosy. (Sharon reaches for her cigarette pack from in front of Terry). What's your little boy's name?
Terry: Marc. Marc Harvey Johnson. Sounds like a hotel. (She says in a whisper, smiles then adds in a childlike voice) We stayed at the Marc Harvey Johnson. (Terry looks at Sharon then at Di.) Sounds phony, doesn't it? Like a cheap version. I catch myself, when I say the whole name together, thinking it should be Mock.
--Sharon and Di quickly take their eyes off Terry as she raises her head.
Di: Why the Harvey?
--Sharon gives Di a dirty look; Di simply shrugs her shoulders.
Terry: Douglas insisted. After Harvey Milk.
--Di and Sharon look at Terry and wait im-

(continued)

patiently.
Sharon: Who the hell is Harmey Mulk? (Di and Sharon start laughing as Sharon slurred her words. Terry laughs after they start.)
Terry: Some big gay activist in San Francisco. He was elected Mayor-no, city council, I think. Anyway, some white, ROTC type marches into City Hall and shoots him. I think he shot somebody else too.
--Terry finishes her drink. Diane motions for Joe to fix another round as he looks up from his paperback. They look at each other and start laughing.
Terry: (Still laughing) You'd think I would have figured it out. I mean, what kind of guy names his kid after Harvey Milk! (Terry stops laughing and says slowly) Maybe there were times. I can't remember. You think, it isn't right, but-Is there a list of rules someplace? (Terry shakes her head.) I don't know.
--Joe sets drinks down and takes Diane's money
Sharon: Your ex is gay? I mean, (she pauses a moment) he's really gay?
Terry: (Terry takes a deep breath) As my father says, queer as a three-dollar bill. (Terry pauses and thinks.) He used to say two-dollar bill. Anything that didn't fit. (Says in husky voice) queer as a two-dollar bill. (Terry returns to her own voice.) Can't say it anymore. (Terry points toward her wallet on the bar.) I've got a two-dollar bill in my wallet. Keep it folded behind my license-like the penny in a penny loafer, remember? Besides, two-dollars bills are everywhere. You get them in change, but nobody has a place for the things. There aren't any slots for two-dollar bills. No room. (Terry's eyes are fixed on the smoky glass mirror behind the bar in front of her.) I keep it folded up, hidden from the rest.
--Di and Sharon finish their drinks, Terry realizes what they are doing and finishes hers.
Joe: Last call, Ladies. (Joe says as he checks his watch and starts walking toward them.)
Sharon: (Standing up quickly and a little wobbly) Anybody hungry?
Di: I could use some coffee. (She stands slowly, holding onto the back of the bar stool.)
--Sharon and Di look at Terry still sitting between them. Terry starts to smile, stands up, and reaches for her wallet from the bar.
Sharon: Terry, you wanna come?
Terry: Yeah, I'll even buy the coffee. (Terry opens her wallet, pulls the two-dollar bill from its hiding place and puts it with the other bills.)
--The three women walk out of the bar. Joe walks over to their glasses, picks them up, and wipes the bar top until it is clean and shining.

****

James L. More

AN EARLY MORNING AT THE DEER STAND

It is very quiet and the stillness of night is all around. The dampness of dew can be felt everywhere. Steam is gently rolling ghostlike, lifting off from the creek and moving mysteriously with the thermal currents. An owl can be heard, who-ing in a nearby tree. A whipporwill is whistling its last calls of the night. A rooster in the distance is sounding its first crows of the new dawning day. Soon robins start to chirp their melody as a host of sparrows and other song birds join in the chorus. The owl is now silent, as a crow lets his loud trumpet be heard. Squirrels start their busy day, putting on an acrobatic show, moving through the treetops. The bluejays make their presence be known with a loud shrill reedy voice. In the tree is a visual marvel of a spider's web with dew droplets still clinging along with mosquitoes from the last night. The red oak tree's leaves have a hint of autumn soon to be. My thoughts pass silently as I sit using all my senses, exercising my perceptions, and enjoying the orchestra the conductor so perfectly brings together at sunrise.

****

THE JOY OF GARDENING

Before Steve knew it, Sarah was dead. They were only having a small husband-wife spat when he shoved her. Steve could still hear the sickeningly dull thud her head produced against the edge of the coffee table. It echoed in his mind incessantly.

Steve found it easy to cover up her death. He had thought of calling the police, but decided against it; they would probably think he did it on purpose. He told everyone Sarah had gone to live with her mother after they had had a fight. It was simple and believable. Steve and Sarah were known about town for their stormy marriage.

The body was easily disposed of in the garden along with Sarah's prize-winning roses. Steve could have just as easily diced her up and flushed her down the toilet, but that would have been messy and disrespectful. After all, it wasn't a malevolent murder; it was a tragedy. She was now, literally, a flower among flowers.

Everything went perfectly, that is, until his mother-in-law "popped over for a visit."

"But Sarah isn't at home right now," Steve said.

"I can wait. I haven't travelled 63.4 miles to see you, did I?"

"No, you did not, Bitch," Steve thought as he sat in a chair across from her. She stared at him for a while probably expecting him to say something then started searching through her purse for something that was probably not there. After an hour of uncomfortable silence, the old woman spoke.

"Where is Sarah?"

"I told you. She went out."

"Where?"

"To the store."

"For what?"

"I don't know." Steve finally came to a decision. He definitely did not want to be quizzed for the next two hours, so he decided to tell the truth.

"All right, if you must know, Sarah is in the garden."

He smiled openly.

"The what?"

"The garden. You know, with her roses."

She quickly pushed all her belongings off her lap onto the couch and walked through the house out onto the patio. Steve followed her and leaned against the open patio door with his hands in his pockets. She appeared to scan the back yard for Sarah, then whirled around to Steve.

"What do you take me for? A fool? She's not here! You lied to me!"

"No, I didn't. Come and see, mother." Steve had grabbed her arm and was forcefully dragging the old woman across to the rose bushes. "She's right in the roses." He pulled back a bush and displayed the raised mound of earth proudly. The old woman suddenly went limp and gawked with unbelieving eyes. Soon, Steve was almost joyfully digging another grave next to his wife's, speaking to her as if she were still alive.

"I have a visitor for you, Sarah. Guess who? It's your mother! Isn't that wonderful? See this shovel? I'm sorry, but I made a rather nasty dent in her skull with it. I hope you don't mind. I don't. You've taught me so much in the last couple weeks, Sarah. Like gardening, I've come to adore it. I stay here almost the entire day. Did you know that? Of course you did."

He gleefully tossed the old woman's body into the hole. He whistled a snappy tune as he filled it back up. Steve couldn't remember a time when he was happier than he was at this moment. He gently patted down the loose soil on the top. Leaning on the shovel, he stared at the two graves for a moment longer.

"I love gardening, Sarah, but I don't think I can stop." He turned and left with his shovel. He had some gardening to do--starting with the Watson's next door.

****

Kristin Schaefer

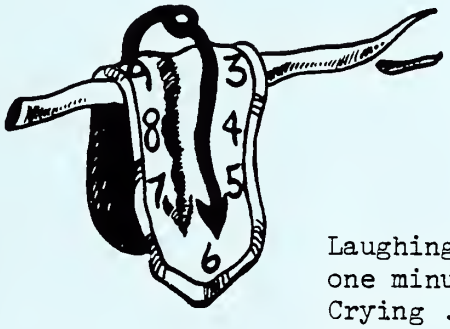
RISING SUN RAP

Well we got a boss
And her name's Irene
But we like to call her
the dragon queen
She wears polyester every day
we know she shops the salvation way
there's another guy
His name is ming
when the radio is on
He likes to sing
He's really cool and he likes to cook
when the pressure's on he can really book
There's another guy
And he's really old
But that's okay
He does what he's told
He gets the eggrolls
And that's his thing
But that's okay
He's friends with ming

****

Andrew

MUGGY WEATHER



Muggy weather,
on hot nights
an artist or actor
is privileged to
pretend--

in muggy weather
when lives are
lived a little
slower,
allowing the true
impact,
of actions to be
of a high veracity . . .

in muggy weather
the crickets and
animals are on
guard,
as are the
guts in us all--
wound
like an aged
clock.

****

Andrew

HUMID AIR

Eighty-nine
a touch past nine,
in one half's sphere
of Post Meridian infatuation . . . .
a rising steaminess
reaches a moist plateau:
eminence of summer's thermostatic
paradise . . .
the heat is here
panting downward on sweat-sopped faces
needing the blasts of a
garden hose's ammunition
as heat-cracked pavement
involuntarily oozes its syrupy tar
burdening furnace-hot autos . . .
evenings so ever hydrous
are tenderly alive
while flitting fireflies embellish
nightfall in dynamic greenglow
as intense in being as
celebrated adolescent dalliance
in a chlorinated pool
soothing sore, itchy backsides
of the sun's vicious burn.

****

MaryAnn Desmarais

THEATER OF PAIN

Laughing hysterically it seems
one minute--the next
Crying ...pathetically unending streams
Who's to say what's best

All the world's a stage
    phony actors die
Exciting novel--turn the page
    lonely ladies sigh
Jealous lovers in a fitful rage

In my room--I sit alone
    Why care--nothing's left to gain
My heart slowly turns to stone
    Imagination? or Theater of Pain

****

Andrew

LIFE SENTENCE

We cry
through black nights
in August heat
as dark as foxholes
sunken below a
ravaged earth . . .
Kisses shed light
as cavecracks
permit sun streaks
to break inside
a barren core
and we then sigh
in bursting relief,
to soon forget
the rigid cementing
of our decisiveness--
a mindful act
conceived within
a vacuous martyrdom.

****

Sharon Peck

INTIMACY APPROACHED

We almost touch,
You and I.
Like the trembling sparrow at my window,
You hover
Nearby
With questioning eyes,
Seeming to need me.
Yet
Something intervenes
As we venture toward intimacy.
My gesture of friendship
And offering of openness
Frighten you away.
You need to escape,
To feel free.
I understand
And yet
As I watch your flight
I wonder...
Where will your wings carry you?
And are you freer than I?

****

Judy Belfield

CONCEIT

Once
she thought
she might sit at a piano
and play.
She did not hear notes.
She saw herself
in layers of chiffon
rippling down over the bench,
the cloth quivering on the floor;
she pictured her arms
bare, milky,
lifting and landing
elegantly,
light as lullabyes.
She dreamed her golden hair
a Godiva extravaganza,
dreamed a silent movie
in pastel colors
blurred ala Renoir,
moving lavishly, languidly--
a graceful vision.
She did not care much
for sound.

****

Duanne Walton

THE SEDUCTION OF SETH CORRIGAN

It was the dream of a lifetime. Seth Corrigan had asked Jessica Menninger out on a date, and she accepted. Jessica was one of the most desired, most coveted, most beautiful, and most popular girls in Arthur Weedlemeyer Memorial High School. How Seth managed to convince her to go out with him was a complete mystery. (Seth attributed it to the grace of God.) After a movie and a dinner at the local pizza place, Jessica invited Seth to her home, a palacial estate on top of a hill overlooking the town.

"Wow! This is quite a place!" Seth exclaimed as they entered the huge living room.

"You like it?" Jessica asked.

"Yeah! Where's your Mom and Dad?"

"They're in Ohio on a business trip."

"I see," Seth said. Funny, why did he feel so uneasy?

(continued)

"Want to see the rest of the house," Jessica asked.

"Sure," Seth said.

As he was showed around the house, Seth couldn't help but wonder why she brought him here. What was the purpose of bringing him to a huge deserted house? Unless...Oh no! She wouldn't do that, would she? She probably just wanted to show him around her house, didn't she?

"How'd you like to see my bedroom?" Jessica asked.

"Y-your bedroom?" Seth stuttered.

"Yeah. Is something wrong?"

"Uh, it's getting late. Maybe I'd better go," Seth said.

"Oh. Sure. Shall I see you to the door?"

"Certainly. Listen, it's been great going out with you," Seth said as they walked through the estate.

"Yeah," Jessica said. "Some guys think I can't be approached because I come from a rich family and I'm popular and things like that. That's not true. I'm just like any normal girl."

"That's good to hear," Seth replied, relieved that his fears were totally unfounded.

"I have feelings, thoughts, and desires."

"That's true."

"And right now, what I desire is you!" Jessica said as she wrapped her arms around him and fixed her eyes on his.If Seth had a panic button, someone just pressed it.

"Now--now, wait a minute, Jessica. I-I don't think that..."

But Jessica wasn't listening. She was too busy unbuttoning Seth's shirt.

"Now Jessica!" Seth yelled as he backed away from her, buttoning his shirt.

"Did anyone ever tell you that you're soooo cute?" Jessica purred.

Seth continued to back away, but stumbled over his own feet.

Jessica kneeled down beside him, and embraced him.

"Seth, what's wrong? Aren't you in the mood for a little . . . fun?"

"Well, it's not that," Seth replied. "I-I like to have fun as much as the next person. It's just that. . ."

Then someone in Seth's head started screaming at him. This someone screamed things like This is it! It's now or never! You'll never get this chance again! Seth knew what the voices were telling him. He had the desires to make love to a woman quite often. But, he always told himself that he should wait until he was married. And yet, there was no guarantee that he would get married. After all, who's to say? Even if he did get married, it was probably a long way off, and Jessica was right here, right now. Fortunately, Seth's brain had a sudden attack of sanity. It screamed at his legs to run like crazy. Seth got to his feet, and ran. Jessica kicked off her high heels and ran after him. The two ran a merry chase throughout the large estate. After being chased through the halls, around the kitchen table, into the den, out of the den, and over several pieces of furniture, Seth found himself in Jessica's parents' bedroom. Jessica had him cornered.

"Are you getting tired, yet?" Seth asked her for the fifth time.

"Nope. I'm still fired up," Jessica hissed as she got closer and closer, her arms outstretched. Seth leaped onto the bed, bounced off, and thrust open the doors to the bedroom balcony. He stood on the balcony, looking down at the large swimming pool. What the heck is a swimming pool doing so close to the house, he thought. Seth then felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned around. Jessica wrapped her arms around him, and pressed her face close to his.

"You wouldn't want to leave a nice girl like me in this big house alone, would you?" she whispered ever so gently.

Go for it! Why are you trying to fight it? the voice inside him shrieked.

Seth was all worn out from running (it would take care of his jogging for the rest of the week.) He was tired, and Jessica was so beautiful. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all.

No! No! It wouldn't be right, not yet anyway. With a massive effort of his strength, Seth pushed himself away from Jessica and jumped

(continued)

off the balcony. He was suspended in mid-air for a fraction of a second, then plummeted into the pool. The cold water assaulted Seth's nerves, but he managed to swim to the surface and get out of the pool.

"Seth!" Jessica yelled.

"Look, Jessica," Seth said. "I like you. I like you a lot. But I just don't think I'm ready for sex yet. I hope you understand."

"All right. You know I respect you for this. Do you think we could go out again sometime?"

"Oh, I don't see why not. I'll give you a call. Oh, and Jessica?"

"Yes, Seth?" Jessica asked.

"Thanks for the workout," Seth said as he headed for his car.

****

Andrew

NEVER

To never gain
is to never know
how much pain
it takes to show
of what you're best:
where is the "gift" -
upon passing the Test -
feeling the lift
known as satisfaction
seldom is found
by a sour reaction
if dynamic dreams
crash
to the hard-core ground

To never cry
is to never release
a wish to die
or the damaged piece
in an anguished soul
once perfectly well
now darker than coal
or a private hell
hidden far away
from any who'd see
the severe price to pay
if situations
become entangled,
secretly

To never desire
is to never feel
the glorious fire
of life's finest appeal:
the artistic act --
sharing your life,
treated "matter-of-fact"
by many a man . . .
and wife . . .
creators can partake
in fanatical sensitivity
but never remake
the vital First Rule
nor its fabulous intensity.

****

Elizabeth Russell

BLUSH

Flamingo
hues
pastel
silken,
arched,
ivory
curves,
tense
against
humid
pulsing
pressure.

****

Laurette Morello

NO, YOU WOULDN'T

No, you wouldn't really want
to know what's on my mind.
Because, if you did,
you wouldn't be able
to handle it as I can't.

****

Val Heaton

BEING USED

Pressed between my fantasies
Beams a dim light of reality
In the dreams that cloud my mind
Just beyond my grasp of time

There is someone else I can feel
Who is swimming in my soul
Yet I am drowning in it hopelessly

Caught between here and reality
There is no place for my thoughts
For He is always hearing them

Always.

****

Sharon Peck

UNITY

"I don't need you," said the finger,
Pointing smugly at the toe.
"We haven't much in common,
And you're just too old to grow."

Two eyes looked down upon the nose
And narrowed in disgust.
"That part is unattractive.
He could never win our trust."

The mouth was smirking at the ears
And feeling rather proud.
"That pair has never said a word.
They shouldn't be allowed."

And so the body suffered
As each part did his best
To make himself important,
Forgetting all the rest.

The pain grew strong and soon the body
Moaned and groaned and cried.
Its parts now independent,
The body slowly died.

****

Andrew

LOVESICK

A taste of love
a touch of live,
authentic fervor--
monumental remedy
for sallowing soulaches
and handcuffed hearts . . .
a deluxe dinner
at ala carte price.
As the instance
occurs,
down-to-earth
adults
gain license
to be fifteen again.

****

Andrew

JEALOUSY

A slightly heinous glance
formed from carefree
impartiality,
offbeat and vindictive
provoking and honest
from gut-level reaction--
graphic,
material.
An eyebrow raised--
a sneer unleashed--
elemental,
a force to inflame
jaundiced mellowness
into steel-belted
wrath.

****

Judy Belfield

MAGIC

Warm varnished doors
lit mellow by halfhearted light
in a one-windowed hallway
late afternoon.
I smell pork chops frying
hear muted voices,
a floor board complain
under worn carpeting
probably gray.
I am alone again
but I like it here
sitting on the stairs
in my sleeveless dress,
in the shadowy hall
sweat beads jiggling
under the hair on my forehead
in time with the wiggle of my leg.
I could pretend to be
the landlord--
listen at doors
peek through keyholes
discover a forbidden kitten
then raise hell--
yell about eviction.
Listen!
Was that an ever-so-soft
tiny little mew
way off in a bedroom closet
next to some little girl's rollaway bed?
I'd be a mean landlord--
put the kitten
and the little girl
on the street
just as it got dark
when all the monsters
get restless
start looking for
little girls
to do those horrible things to...
But it's too hot to spy
tonight
and I don't hear that kitten any more--
probably eating those pork chops.
Think I'll go upstairs
and see what Mama's cooking.
As I tiptoe past Mrs. Palmer's door
I'll cross my fingers
as usual:
can't be too cautious
with witches around.

****

Andrew

OLD BEDROOM

Old bedroom--
in dim lucency
where once I was king
in my adolescence
the entire world
belonged to me .....
inside four walls
sweet jazz melodies
drifting about,
permitted a young
man
to believe ideally
of all I could be
someday
while sunstreaks glided
across my bed
to lead into night--
I'd drift to sleep
to dream about dreams
of what life was to be
at the moment,
then . . . for me.

****

Andrew

CEDAR CHEST

Ten-year high school
book
old black and white
photos--
and Dad's gun.
A few yellowing pages
a relative's life--
or death,
eons ago .....

next to an ageless
coin collection,
so anciently priceless
is worth as much
as the price of these
endeavors--
the cost . . .
years and years ago . . .

****

John Buell

ERASER HEAD

I saw a movie
  it was called Eraser Head
I don't remember the plot;
  I think I was drunk.
I woke up the next morning
  and looked in the mirror.
I had Eraser Head's hair.

****

Judy Belfield

...AND ON PALATINE

Blue Baby
got that way
from blooded parents
with silver-forked tongues,
purple-born
too good for cake,
or living hog-low.
Privilege,
fair determinant of worth,
attended the birth
cut the cord,
strummed harmony
on a gilded lyre;
the notes, reaching
angelic choirs,
translated, transmitted, transported
to God Itself.
Lullabye-soft
are blue Baby's eyes,
a dimple in her chin
the beginning of a black hole
sucking air out of the far regions
of Milky Way
face turning blue
as blue as blue...
Around rosebud lips
the faint shadow
of oxygen-deprivation.
A saxophone wails,
"Save the baby"
too late.
Nobody cares.

****

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

WORDEATER

PETROVK-88-